

Acts: To the Ends of the Earth

Spring & Summer Sermon Series



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Volume 1, Issue 4

Evangelism in Acts Part 2

Last newsletter we discovered that all growth comes from God, specifically the work of the Holy Spirit. This work of the Holy Spirit is significant when we look at the challenges that faced the early church. These challenges were both internal and external.

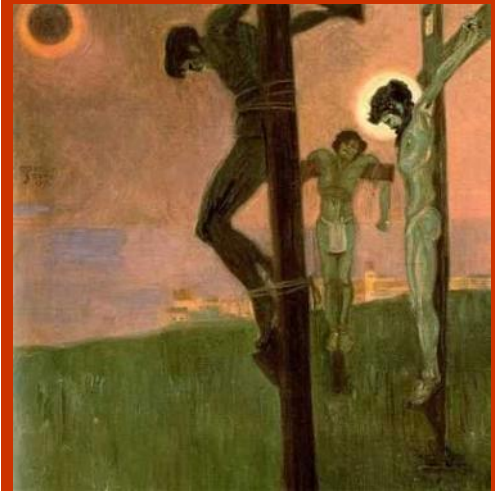
The external challenges came from both the Jewish leaders and the Roman government. Beginning in Acts 4 we see Peter and John being held by the Jewish leaders because Peter healed a crippled man. While at first, the persecution of the early Christians seemed rather limited, it wasn't until the death of Stephen at the hands of Saul that the church faced real persecution. Surprisingly, this persecution was a benefit to the message of the gospel. Before Jesus ascended, he commanded the disciples to proclaim the good news about Him to Jerusalem, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Yet, we see that the Apostles remained in Jerusalem. It took severe persecution to move the Apostles out of Jerusalem and bring the gospel to those in Samaria, Judea and beyond.

The external challenges came in the form of persecution, while the internal challenges came in the

form of theology, personality and disagreements within the church. The first issue to arise for the early Christians was the place of the Gentiles in God's Kingdom. They knew that God had opened the gospel to all people but how did that relate to Jewish practice and the Gentiles? It wasn't until Peter's vision at Cornelius' house in Acts 10, that "to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life".

The other internal challenges that the church faced was the fallen nature of the Apostles themselves. Paul and Barnabas became divided over John Mark. Peter and Paul both had conflicts on how to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Some Christians even left the faith ["made a ship wreck of their faith"].

Amazingly, throughout all of these challenges, the Holy Spirit used each of them to further the message of the gospel. In our life today, we can trust that whatever we do, the Holy Spirit is always at work bringing people to Christ, working even through our own foibles.



Crucifixion

By Egon Schiele

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Christ Alone 2

Christ Alone

Acts 4:12 Peter said, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Many people today believe that there are multiple ways to ‘heaven’ or that all gods are the same they are just called by different names. They believe that as long as someone is ‘nice’ then God should love and accept them. Sadly, this is a fallacy. As Peter states, there is salvation in no one else but Jesus Christ. There is only one God, one Lord, one Faith. All of the other ‘gods’ out in the world are sparks and flashes designed to distract us from the one true God, revealed in Jesus Christ.

Surprisingly, those who argue the ‘multiple paths/gods’, typically don’t know much about the vast differences

between the belief systems of each religion. All religions can be boiled down to two belief systems. One system demands that you do a certain set of things or behaviors. The other system states that one person has done everything for you and offers freely salvation. Guess which one is Christianity and which one is the rest of the religions?

| Study Questions:

| Read Acts 4 & 5

| 1. What was the sin in the deed of Ananias and Sapphira? (Acts 5:2-4, 8 and 1 Samuel 16:7)

| 2. Why do you think such severe consequences were laid upon this couple’s sin? (Read Romans 6:23, 1 Cor. 5:6, Galatians 6:7-8)

| 3. Why do you think the Sadducees in particular dislike the message of the Apostles?

| 4. Are there times in your life that you “must obey God rather than men”? What are they?